

# Congressional Resurgence and the Destabilization of US Foreign Policy

WALLACE EARL WALKER

© 1987 D. C. Heath and Company

Wars agitate Congress. In the grand arena of institutional politics, large-scale wars have intensified the legislative-executive struggle for dominance in policymaking. The great containment struggle waged by the United States from 1941 to 1966—what most call World War II and the Cold War—was an exception. The Vietnam War was not.

Following the Revolutionary War, the Confederation and the Constitutional Congresses were the dominant institutions in the government. The brilliant maneuvering of Thomas Jefferson and the populism of Andrew Jackson provided but fleeting exceptions to this rule.<sup>1</sup> During the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln turned the presidency into the ascendant branch in the federal government. Motivated by Lincoln's unprecedented assertions of power, Congress reasserted its policymaking authority after the Civil War and continued to rule through the end of the 19th century.<sup>2</sup> The same pattern was evident during and after World War I: executive branch preeminence followed by congressional reassertion of power. As E. S. Corwin and Theodore Lowi have taught us, there is a cyclical nature to presidential power, and since the Great Depression and World War II, presidents have aggrandized power to turn government into an active, reforming force both at home and abroad.<sup>3</sup>

External threats to national security invite a presidential response, because only the US chief executive possesses the necessary resources and

Report Documentation Page				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.					
1. REPORT DATE <b>1988</b>		2. REPORT TYPE		3. DATES COVERED <b>00-00-1988 to 00-00-1988</b>	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE <b>Congressional Resurgence and the Destabilization of US Foreign Policy</b>				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S)				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) <b>U.S. Army War College,ATTN: Parameters ,122 Forbes Avenue ,Carlisle,PA,17013-5238</b>				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT <b>Approved for public release; distribution unlimited</b>					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT <b>Same as Report (SAR)</b>	18. NUMBER OF PAGES <b>14</b>	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT <b>unclassified</b>	b. ABSTRACT <b>unclassified</b>	c. THIS PAGE <b>unclassified</b>			

horizons to react. Historically, such responses have entailed an expansion of power as exemplified by Lincoln's blockade of the South during the Civil War or Franklin Roosevelt's lend-lease agreement with Great Britain. These executive assertions of power threaten the institutional arrangements established by the Constitution. Congress has no choice but to reassert itself after such episodes; to fail to do so is to risk irrelevance in foreign affairs and ultimately in domestic concerns as well.

Thus the great containment crusade under a unified national banner was anomalous. Although Congress did seek in a tentative way to reassert itself immediately after World War II in such areas as aid to Greece and Turkey, the Marshall Plan, and the 1947 National Security Act, the arrival of the Cold War in 1947 and 1948 seemed almost immediately to relegate Congress to the role of a minor actor. Congress did not seek to reestablish its authority after the Korean War. Thus the rise of the Soviet empire, the threat of nuclear war, and the necessity for the United States to play a dominant role in world affairs provided the executive branch with a tailor-made opportunity for national security policy dominance. In fact, as Arthur Schlesinger has noted, a global foreign policy swallowed up congressional power.<sup>4</sup>

This article will explain how Congress reasserted itself during the Vietnam War and thereafter. Essentially, I will argue that congressional reactions to the war itself were less significant than the statutes Congress imposed on the executive branch as a result of the Vietnam War. Those statutes have dramatically restrained the presidency in conducting national security affairs. The result of these laws is the domestication, the democratization, and the destabilization of national security policymaking.

### *Congressional Reactions to the Southeast Asian War*

Congress supported the war in Vietnam. Indeed Congress and Presidents Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon served as partners for that war. As Leslie Gelb has observed, the weight of congressional actions regarding Vietnam both "reinforced the stakes against losing and introduced constraints

---

Lieutenant Colonel (P) Wallace Earl Walker (USMA, 1967) is Professor of Public Policy in the Department of Social Sciences at West Point. Colonel Walker served as a White House Fellow in 1980-81 in the Department of Energy and in the White House Office of Policy Development. He holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He is the author of *Changing Organizational Culture* (Univ. of Tennessee Press, 1986) and editor of the book *National Security and the U.S. Constitution*, forthcoming. The present article was adapted from Colonel Walker's chapter titled, "Domesticating Foreign Policy: Congress and the Vietnam War," in *Democracy, Strategy and Vietnam: Implications for American Policymaking*, ed. G. K. Osborn et al. (Lexington Books, 1987), which was reviewed in *Parameters*, June 1988. Colonel Walker emphasizes that the views in this article are his own and do not necessarily represent those of the Department of the Army or USMA.

---

against winning.”<sup>5</sup> Thus, from the early 1950s through the introduction of American combat troops in Vietnam and extending to their withdrawal in 1973, Congress as an institution backed presidential initiatives in Southeast Asia and routinely appropriated funds for the war.

It is equally fair to say, however, that Senate doves were outspoken in their opposition to the war from the first introduction of ground troops. The incursion of US troops into Cambodia in April 1970 was perhaps the seminal event which crystallized broad congressional opposition. Once troops were withdrawn from Southeast Asia and the American prisoners of war were released in 1973, Congress moved quickly to end US involvement.

Congressional concern for not “losing Southeast Asia” to communist influence dates to the early 1950s. This attitude was clearly evident in the Eisenhower Administration’s consultations with senior members of Congress in April 1954 over the use of American combat support to relieve the beleaguered French fortress at Dien Bien Phu. It was also evident in the Senate’s approval of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization that same year.<sup>6</sup>

With the deterioration of the political situation in South Vietnam in the early 1960s, the increased success of the Viet Cong guerrilla movement, and the reaction of North Vietnam to increased US military presence in Southeast Asia, Congress was more than willing to sustain President Johnson’s initiatives. After the alleged attack by North Vietnam on the US destroyer *Maddox* in August 1964, Johnson won support for the Tonkin Gulf Resolution by a House vote of 414-0 and a Senate vote of 88 to 2. The following spring Johnson again handily won congressional support after declaring that his proposal for \$400 million to support military operations in Vietnam would constitute a referendum on his policies.<sup>7</sup> Subsequent congressional votes were equally supportive. *Congressional Quarterly* calculated that from 1965 through the end of 1972, over 95 percent of congressmen present and voting approved war-related appropriations on the final votes in each chamber.<sup>8</sup> To put the matter another way, of the 113 recorded votes on the Vietnam War in this period, almost all sustained presidential initiatives.<sup>9</sup>

Congressional hearings did raise objections to the manner in which the chief executive managed the war. Within one year after the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, Senator William Fulbright, Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, began to have serious doubts about his support for the Resolution and for US actions in Vietnam. Hearings held by his committee in 1966 and 1968 provided legitimacy for those opposed to the war and later prompted opposition to the war.<sup>10</sup>

After the Cambodian incursion, Senate doves were able to gain congressional support for some of their initiatives.<sup>11</sup> In January 1971 the Cooper-Church Amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act banned the further use of ground combat troops in Cambodia. Also in that month, Congress repealed the Tonkin Gulf Resolution. After the Christmas bombings of 1972 and the

return of all American prisoners, Senate doves were able to win passage of a bill which prohibited the reintroduction of US combat forces in Vietnam after 15 August 1973.<sup>12</sup>

In 1974 Congress heavily cut Administration requests for military aid to South Vietnam. In the face of a coordinated and massive North Vietnamese military assault in South Vietnam, President Ford objected to these cuts, but Congress would not restore them.<sup>13</sup> In April 1975 Congress refused to provide any further military aid to South Vietnam. These actions further eroded the morale of the Saigon government in the face of a rapidly deteriorating situation. By May, the North had overrun all of South Vietnam.

Thus Congress sustained support for military prosecution of the Vietnam War as long as US troops were engaged in combat or held prisoner. Once US troops had departed, Congress cut US aid almost immediately and ended it altogether soon thereafter.

### *Congressional Reaction to Executive Ascendancy in Foreign Policy*

Congressional reactions to the Vietnam War itself were less significant than congressional reassertiveness in foreign affairs. The impact of the war on presidential hegemony (and congressional subservience) in national security policymaking was profound. Without question the war shattered the post-World War II myth of executive infallibility in foreign and defense affairs and the consensus on containing communism. In turn, the war promoted a wholesale restructuring of government procedures in policymaking.<sup>14</sup>

Congressional resurgence in national security policymaking during the 1970s was stunning both in its speed and its breadth. Listed in the accompanying table are the more significant pieces of legislation that followed the demise of popular support for the war in early 1968.<sup>15</sup> Beyond these landmark statutes were a host of other congressional actions that impinged upon the formulation and conduct of foreign policy during the 1970s and 1980s. For example, Congress imposed limits on trade with the Soviet Union, prohibited covert operations in Angola, and restricted arms sales to Jordan and Saudi Arabia. In 1988 it first cut off all US aid to the Contra rebels in Nicaragua, and then proceeded to consider various carrot-and-stick aid formulas intended to achieve Congress's own vision of a desirable diplomatic outcome. Former Senator John Tower has counted over 150 restrictions on executive influence in the 1970s alone.<sup>16</sup>

The predisposition of Speaker of the House James Wright to negotiate with President Daniel Ortega of Nicaragua and Miguel Cardinal Obando y Bravo, the Roman Catholic Primate of Nicaragua, over US policy in Central America is unheard-of in the post-World War II period.<sup>17</sup> Other examples of such assertiveness include the Fiscal Year 1988 reductions in State Department operating funds and recent congressional decisions restricting

*Congress Reasserts Itself:  
Post-Vietnam Statutes that Transformed Foreign Policymaking*

1970	Legislative Reorganization Act	Enhanced congressional oversight by expanding congressional staff and increasing the power and responsibilities of the General Accounting Office and the Congressional Research Service.
1972	Case Act	Required details on all executive agreements to be submitted to Congress.
1973	War Powers Resolution	Required presidential reporting on use of troops overseas and subsequent congressional authorization for such troops remaining beyond 90 days.
1973 & 1975	CIA Restrictions	Hughes-Ryan Amendment of 1973 required all CIA operations to be reported; 1975 resolutions created Select Committees on Intelligence in both chambers.
1974	Budget and Impoundment Control Act	Implemented greater congressional control over the budget and restricted presidential reappropriation and impoundment of funds.
1974	Freedom of Information Act Amendments	Made agency documents more easily available by reducing the hurdles erected by executive bureaucracies.
1974 & 1976	Amendments to Arms Export Control Act	Provided for notice of foreign arms sales and opportunity for Congress to veto such sales.
1976	National Emergencies Act	Restricted presidential use of national emergency legislation and required him to inform Congress of any action he takes under this legislation.
1976	Harkin Amendment	Created a human rights coordinator in the State Department, required annual reports for each country receiving security assistance, and placed security aid restrictions on countries violating human rights.

funding of the United Nations peacekeeping force in Lebanon. Deputy Secretary of State John Whitehead urged a delegation of foreign ambassadors to lobby legislators directly to collect these peacekeeping funds because, as he put it, the State Department had little or no influence over Congress.<sup>18</sup> John Felton has aptly observed that many members of Congress have sought to play secretary of state in enacting State Department authorization bills.

The final 1988 Senate bill "staked out a position on virtually every foreign policy issue facing the United States, as well as some matters over which Washington has little influence."<sup>19</sup>

The Vietnam War appears to be the central cause of congressional resurgence in national security affairs. Analysts list a host of explanations that have contributed to this new congressional assertiveness. Among the more significant are the following: the Watergate scandal; impoundment of congressionally appropriated funds by the Nixon Administration; a new generation of congressmen impatient with established internal norms of seniority and policy procedures; the severalfold increase in congressional staff; detente between the Soviet Union and the United States; US-Soviet parity in nuclear forces; and the new salience of such economic issues as energy and international trade in foreign policy.<sup>20</sup> One common but erroneous explanation is the pattern of Republican presidents and Democratic congresses witnessed so frequently since the Eisenhower years. The truth is, however, that there was just as much dissonance between the two branches during the Carter Administration, when the Democratic Party dominated both branches of government, as during the Reagan years.

In the final analysis, then, the public rancor and congressional frustration over the conduct of the Vietnam War remain either the most significant explanation for congressional resurgence or are coequal in prominence with Nixon's impoundment of funds and Watergate. Some analysts even argue that Watergate and the impoundments were in fact the result of the sense of isolation and paranoia enveloping the White House over public reaction to Nixon's prosecution of the Vietnam War.<sup>21</sup>

### *Implications of Congressional Resurgence*

Congressional reassertion of power has had three effects on national security affairs: domestication, democratization, and destabilization.

• *Domestication.* Post-World War II presidents used two very different approaches to policymaking. On domestic issues intensive effort was required to design a new initiative, to dramatize the need for change, to build a supporting coalition inside and outside Congress, and to appease constituencies whose interests were threatened by the proposal.<sup>22</sup> The success rate for such initiatives was never very high, nor for that matter did presidents expect easy victories.

They did expect to be more successful in national security affairs. In this realm, the president possessed a more plentiful range of options: propaganda initiatives available through the US Information Agency, arms sales or economic aid to foreign governments, secret executive agreements, CIA covert action, or military intervention. The choices in national security policymaking involved deciding what to do in initiating a new policy or what

response was appropriate for a crisis; the options in both areas were usually unappealing. However, once the decision was made, the president needed only to explain his policy to perhaps a half dozen senior congressmen and provide a few cryptic public announcements.<sup>23</sup>

This distinction between domestic and national security policymaking no longer applies.<sup>24</sup> The statutes listed in the table have deprived the president of his readily available options. To cite but a few examples, the Arms Export Control Act makes foreign military sales subject to congressional approval, while the Case Act no longer permits secret executive agreements. National security policymaking must now be conducted largely in the open.

Furthermore, Congress has disaggregated into what might be called member-centered government.<sup>25</sup> In other eras, Congress was dominated by the political parties. In the early 1900s, party government gave way to committee government. As a result of the 1970 Legislative Reorganization Act, the Budget Act, and numerous other resolutions, Congress has fragmented its power centers even further. Member-centered government is characterized by vastly reduced power of party and committee leaders and by enhanced resources and influence for individual members of Congress. This fragmentation has forced the president to search for fresh coalitions on virtually every foreign policy measure in order to achieve his ends. In fact the president's failure to build such coalitions and to appease opposing constituencies affects not only his reputation at home, but his credibility abroad. Allied and neutral nations are increasingly less disposed to negotiate with an administration unable to obtain congressional support for its initiatives. Indeed, Congress has become a principal obstacle to coherence in US national security policy.<sup>26</sup>

Presidential comments on the difficulty in conducting US affairs under these conditions further confirm the domestication of national security policy. Former President Gerald Ford has described his attempt to consult with Congress as required by the War Powers Act in the 1975 *Mayaguez* rescue effort, which occurred during a congressional recess:

Not one of the key bipartisan leaders of Congress was in Washington. . . . This, one might say, is an unfair example, since the Congress was in recess. But it must be remembered that critical world events, especially military operations, seldom wait for Congress to meet. In fact most of what goes on in the world happens in the middle of the night, Washington time.<sup>27</sup>

Former President Carter and Vice President Mondale have been equally critical about coordinating with Congress on foreign affairs.<sup>28</sup> Thus, in an era of member-centered government, presidential consultation with Congress during periods of crisis borders on the undoable. In an era of member-centered government, presidents can no longer confidently negotiate



with a small number of congressional leaders, as President Eisenhower did in 1954 over the siege at Dien Bien Phu.

In many ways the burdens on presidents pale in comparison to the demands on cabinet and subcabinet officers. Francis Wilcox has counted 16 committees in the Senate alone which call for foreign policy testimony from the administration. It is more often the case than not that cabinet secretaries, their deputies, undersecretaries, and assistant secretaries must provide essentially the same testimony two or more times before various congressional committees. For example, initiatives on foreign military sales often require testimony before the House International Affairs Committee, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the House Armed Services Committee, and the Senate Armed Services Committee. In fact, former Deputy Secretary of State Warren Christopher has calculated that he and Secretary of State Cyrus Vance spent more than 25 percent of their time dealing with the Congress.<sup>29</sup>

Congressional intervention in national security affairs does have certain advantages which presidents are often loathe to advertise. Given that policymaking is now more open and the executive branch is no longer viewed as infallible, the president needs protection.<sup>30</sup> There is much to be said for a presidential strategy that blames intractable foreign policy problems on congressionally mandated statutes, statutes which can plausibly be claimed to "shackle the president in the conduct of foreign policy." Thus a president could blame a deteriorating situation in Angola on congressional restraints on covert activity or the refusal of Nicaragua's Sandinista government to liberalize on legislative restrictions on military aid to the Contras.

- *Democratization.* Paralleling the domestication of the foreign- and defense-policy processes has been the increasing activism and influence of new players heretofore excluded from the system. These players operate from both inside and outside Congress. Positioned to take advantage of existing congressional repertoires for authorization, budgeting, and oversight, these players have been able to influence Congress on national security matters.

The authorization process is now much more detailed in the area of national security affairs. For example, prior to the 1960s, Congress would authorize a new weapon system and then appropriate funds for the purchase of an entire set of weapons. Now, the House and Senate Armed Services Committees annually must authorize each new ship, airplane, and tank, and then the House and Senate Appropriations Committees must appropriate funds for every one of these weapons.<sup>31</sup> Passage through this legislative labyrinth provides numerous opportunities for changing or deleting a program to such an extent that the end result is often unrecognizable.

To fund all national security agencies and programs, the budgeting process must be negotiated. The 1974 Budget Act provides for new Budget Committees in each chamber and for a new repertoire for moving funding requests through the Congress. This new repertoire has impeded and constrained

national security policies. As often as not, no budget is passed, and programs must survive on continuing resolutions or previous-year funding levels.

The oversight process is less routinized, but equally accessible to outside interests. Further empowered by the 1970 Legislative Reorganization Act and the 1974 Budget Act, the legislative and government operations committees in both chambers have become much more active in conducting oversight since the Vietnam War. For instance, congressional committees monitor both the reports on human rights behavior of foreign governments that receive security assistance and reports on executive agreements. More oversight has meant more executive accountability, but it has also meant that executive officials are required to spend more of their time calculating congressional reactions before they initiate or implement policies. Thus, in the aggregate, the authorization, budgetary, and oversight processes have all been modified by the post-Vietnam reforms initiated by Congress and have opened up national security affairs to review and influence more fully than at any time in US history.

Not only have the policymaking processes been altered, but the players have changed as well. Inside the Congress, the House has become as influential in national security affairs as the Senate. The statutory reforms listed above give the House every bit as much influence over such issues as executive agreements and foreign military sales. More committees are also involved. The Budget Committees and the Select Committees on Intelligence are new additions. Older committees such as the Commerce and Interior Committees have expanded their domains to include such issues as foreign trade, energy, and transnational pollution. Subcommittees of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, such as the Asian and Pacific Affairs Subcommittee, chaired by Representative Stephen J. Solarz, have amassed considerable influence in the foreign policy community.<sup>32</sup> All this attention on national security affairs means both more openness and more conflict as each committee and subcommittee seek to stake out their domains. More openness and more conflict add up to more influence for congressmen, who can now intervene in many more ways, and for outside interests groups, who find national security policymaking conducted more openly.

There are two other new sets of players within the Congress, each of which has been shaped by the Vietnam War. The first is a new generation of congressmen who are disposed to member-centered government.<sup>33</sup> A number of them became politically active in reaction to the Vietnam War. Many in this generation see themselves as liberals committed to the idealism of John Kennedy and the Great Society programs created by Lyndon Johnson. They tend to view US involvement overseas with skepticism, if not outright hostility. Congressmen Michael Synar and Bruce Morrisson, for example, were both actively involved in the antiwar movement. Both have been unsupportive of US intervention in Lebanon and Central America.<sup>34</sup>

The second set of new players on Capitol Hill are congressional staffers. During the 1970s, their numbers increased severalfold. Now virtually every member has at least one legislative assistant whose full-time, or at least principal, concern is national security affairs. Committee staffs have grown enormously too. Whereas in 1947 when Francis Wilcox served on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee staff with only three clerks, today the committee has some 60 staff members, most of whom are highly trained professionals.<sup>35</sup> The principal preoccupation of each of these staffers is to find racy issues for their subcommittee chairman, issues which will enhance their patron's stature or influence. Such issues are willingly provided by interest groups preoccupied with their own special concerns.<sup>36</sup>

Outside the Congress, many more groups now actively influence national security affairs than before the Vietnam War. Both the Freedom of Information Act Amendments and the Case Act provisions have provided such groups with sufficient intelligence to enable them to take activist roles in advising both the Congress and the executive on a host of issues. Ethnic organizations representing Greeks and Jews, for example, have played an increasingly active role in foreign arms sales to Turkey and to Arab countries. Most commercial interests are now represented by full-time lobbyists working out of trade associations or out of newly created Washington headquarters. Lobbying has become much more aggressive and tends to be based on shifting coalitions which create temporary "war rooms" to organize their efforts on issues coming before the White House or Congress.<sup>37</sup>

*The Gulf and the War Powers Act.*  
**WHOSE WAR IS IT, ANYWAY?**

**A Tug of War  
Over Peace**

*The Senate makes 'sausage'  
of the State Department*

*Ortega tries to rope Washington into cease-fire  
talks, and the speaker of the House muscles in*

**Capitol Hill Broth  
Being Seasoned by a Lot of Cooks**

**House Again Rebuffs Reagan Arms Policies**

**U.S. official  
says Contra  
war 'is over,' lost on Hill**

Still a third set of new outsiders includes ideological groups and think tanks representing all points along the political spectrum. The Heritage Foundation, the Hoover Institution, the Committee on the Present Danger, the Nuclear Freeze Political Action Committee, and the Center for Defense Information—to name only a few—have allied themselves with various supporters on Capitol Hill.<sup>38</sup> The final cluster of outside groups seeking influence on national security affairs in Congress are foreign governments, who in former years did their influence-peddling solely within the executive branch. Aware that congressional sensibilities need to be stroked, foreign leaders now seek to spend as much time on Capitol Hill as they do in the White House. Furthermore, foreign embassies such as those of Jordan, Israel, and Canada openly lobby congressmen on such issues as security assistance and fisheries treaties.<sup>39</sup> Embassies or designated lobbyists such as those representing Korea and South Africa also seek to build grass-roots support. As one observer noted, the effort of embassies “to influence American opinion has become less surreptitious and far more sophisticated and subtle.”<sup>40</sup>

Thus it would seem that groups outside the Congress have become more intrusive, while new players inside the Congress have become more polarized on foreign and defense policy.<sup>41</sup> Intrusiveness and polarization have promoted democratization in national security policymaking as groups inside and outside Congress demand the attention of political executives and congressmen.

• *Destabilization.* Congress has responded to this clamor by becoming involved in everything and therefore capable of acting on almost nothing. Thus the result of domestication and democratization of US national security policy is destabilization.

In member-centered government, no issues are considered sacrosanct. All are subject to intervention or at least frantic, episodic review through the authorization, appropriation, budgetary, or oversight processes.<sup>42</sup> Impasse often results when the president is deprived of freedom of action and is unable to sustain more than a few initiatives in foreign affairs or when Congress is predisposed to suspiciousness toward presidential initiatives in all facets of national security affairs. Thus treaties go unratified—as in the 1979 fisheries agreement with Canada—or are ratified at the price of debilitating “deals” forced upon the president and with direct Senate involvement in the negotiations—as in the Panama Canal Treaty. Other manifestations of this impasse are the numerous country-specific restrictions on foreign economic and security aid, restrictions which weaken US relationships abroad (such as the foreign aid restrictions on Turkey after the Cyprus invasion) or humiliate foreign governments (as in congressional restriction on Hawk missiles sold to Jordan).

Statutory constraints have limited the president’s ability to forge a new consensus on foreign affairs and to guarantee American support to allies

or friendly Third World nations. The Harkin Amendment's emphasis on human rights has served as a polarizing issue, both within and without the government. Thus we have observed dramatic diplomatic shifts on this issue from the Carter to the Reagan Administrations. The War Powers Act, the CIA restrictions, and liberal concerns in Congress about "another Vietnam" have impeded US ability to sustain a military or paramilitary intervention, thereby creating doubts about the reliability of an American response in a crisis. Allies must now hedge against the unwillingness of the United States to intervene in the first place or, in the event of intervention, against precipitate American withdrawal regardless of the international consequences.<sup>43</sup> Potential adversaries, superpower and Third World alike, are no longer faced with what one senior foreign policy official called the "long shadow of military force" that can intervene and remain in place to back up American negotiating stances. The recent intervention in Grenada and the bombing attack against Libya clearly demonstrate that any US military involvement will be short-lived.

Just as congressional frustration over the handling of the Vietnam War begat the War Powers Act, so that act begat the Weinberger doctrine which has imposed a number of preconditions on the use of military force: e.g. clearly defined political and military objectives, a commitment to winning, and clear support of the Congress and the American public.<sup>44</sup> Such preconditions have created considerable strain in the national security establishment, with Secretary of State George Schultz and then-National Security Advisor Robert McFarlane having, at one point, been critical of the Defense Secretary and these preconditions.

US national security policy is thus destabilized with no consensus over what aims should be pursued and what means are appropriate. Clearly congressional resurgence has played a central role in creating this state of affairs.

## *Conclusions*

The Vietnam War brought executive-legislative relationships over national security policy full circle. The unusual quiescence of Congress after World War II and Korea ended during and after the Vietnam War.

Congress relearned from the Vietnam War that presidential power cannot go unchecked if Congress is to retain its constitutional powers. What presidents have learned, or should have learned, is that they must forge alliances on Capitol Hill. Arrogance in the face of these Constitutional provisions will, in the end, deprive presidents of their initiative in national security affairs.

Another conclusion to be drawn from the post-Vietnam War period is that a consensus sustained by a recognizable theme in national security

affairs is crucial to executive-legislative relations. Neither President Carter nor President Reagan attended to this requirement to build a new consensus around some predominant strategic idea, preferring instead to pursue an ad hoc approach to security affairs by focusing on specific episodes or issues as they emerged in the course of events. Members of the Reagan Administration have privately stated that they should not articulate a strategic theme, because the details would invite criticism as outsiders contrasted performance with aspirations. What the last two administrations seem not to have realized is that in the absence of a grand strategic theme and consensus in behalf of that theme—as there was for containment before Vietnam—success in specific policy areas is much more difficult to achieve. This is so because congressional supporters find presidential policy initiatives easier to promote if they can make the case that these initiatives sustain a broadly articulated national strategy and thereby serve the national interest.

One must also conclude that a coherent and cohesive foreign policy seems unlikely under conditions of congressional resurgence, unless Congress limits itself to the role of developing consensus on the broad parameters of grand strategy and pressing the executive branch to develop and implement specific policies within that grand design. Such self-limitations on the part of Congress are not likely in the near term. Yet, the longer we wait, the greater the risks to US prestige and influence abroad. Destabilized foreign policymaking is synonymous with drift, not mastery. Drift by the United States means a free world without leadership, a condition unlikely to promote international arrangements that are supportive of US goals and interests.

#### NOTES

1. James Young, *The Washington Community: 1800-1828* (New York: Harcourt Brace & World, 1966); and John Ward, *Andrew Jackson* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1953).
2. E. S. Corwin, *The President: Office and Powers* (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1957), pp. 229-31, and Woodrow Wilson, *Congressional Government* (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1973).
3. Corwin, pp. 234-62, 306-13; and Theodore Lowi, *The End of Liberalism* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1969), pp. 157-90.
4. Arthur Schlesinger, *The Imperial Presidency* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973), p. 206.
5. Leslie Gelb, *The Irony of Vietnam: The System Worked* (Washington: Brookings Institution, 1979), p. 25.
6. James Sundquist, *The Decline and Resurgence of Congress* (Washington: Brookings Institution, 1981), pp. 113-14; and George Herring, *America's Longest War* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1979), pp. 31-32.
7. Alton Frye and Jack Sullivan, "Congress and Vietnam: The Fruits of Anguish," in *The Vietnam Legacy*, ed. Anthony Lake (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1976), p. 198.
8. *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, 27 June 1973, p. 115.
9. Frye and Sullivan, p. 199.
10. Sundquist, p. 241; and Frye and Sullivan, p. 199.
11. Francis Bax, "The Legislative-Executive Relationship in Foreign Policy," *Orbis*, 20 (Winter 1977), 889.
12. Edward Haley, *Congress and the Fall of South Vietnam and Cambodia* (London: Associated Univ. Presses, 1982), pp. 29-31, 41-42.
13. Earl Ravenel, "Consequences of the End Game in Vietnam," *Foreign Affairs*, 43 (July 1975), 651.

14. Hrach Gregorian, "Assessing Congressional Involvement in Foreign Policy," *Review of Politics*, 46 (January 1984), 94-95.
15. Data for the table have been gleaned from virtually all the sources cited in these notes.
16. John Tower, "Congress Versus the President," *Foreign Affairs*, 60 (Winter 1981-82), 234.
17. Steven V. Roberts "The Foreign Policy Tussle: House Speaker Jim Wright Bids for Control," *The New York Times Magazine*, 24 January 1988, pp. 26-33; and Steven V. Roberts "Reagan-Wright Argument Grows on Central America Policy Role," *The New York Times*, 17 November 1987, p. A1.
18. Elaine Sciolono, "State Department to Envoys: Go Directly to Congress," *The New York Times*, 17 November 1987, p. A32.
19. John Felton, "Senators Load Up State Department Measure," *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, 17 October 1987, pp. 2535-38.
20. Sundquist, p. 238; Gregorian, p. 95; Francis Wilcox, "Cooperation vs. Confrontation," *The Atlantic Community Quarterly*, 20 (Fall 1984), 261; Lee Hamilton and Michael Van Dusen, "Making the Separation of Powers Work," *Foreign Affairs*, 57 (Fall 1978), 23; and Lawrence Dodd and Richard Schott, *Congress and the Administrative State* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1979).
21. Gelb, p. 348; and Herring, p. 25.
22. Aaron Wildavsky, "The Two Presidencies," in *Classics of the American Presidency*, ed. Harry Bailey (Oak Park, Ill.: Moore, 1980), pp. 162-72.
23. On the differences between domestic and foreign policymaking before the Vietnam War, see Thomas Cronin, *The State of the Presidency*, 2d ed. (Boston: Little Brown, 1980), pp. 145-54.
24. James Chace, "Is a Foreign Policy Consensus Possible?" *Foreign Affairs*, 57 (Fall 1978), 15-16; Douglas Bennett, "Congress in Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs*, 57 (Fall 1978), 47-48; and Ralph Carter, "Foreign Versus Domestic Policy," a paper delivered to the American Political Science Association Meeting, Washington, D.C., 30 August-2 September 1984.
25. For a further discussion of this phenomenon, see Wallace Earl Walker, *Changing Organizational Culture* (Knoxville: Univ. of Tennessee Press, 1986), especially chapters 3 and 7.
26. David Abshire, "Lessons of Vietnam," in Lake, p. 406.
27. Gerald Ford, *A Time to Heal* (New York: Harper and Row, 1979), p. 252.
28. Sundquist, pp. 299-300.
29. Warren Christopher, "Ceasefire Between the Branches," *Foreign Affairs*, 60 (Summer 1982), 1000.
30. Bennett, p. 43.
31. Holbert Carroll, "The Congress and National Security Policy," in *The Congress And America's Future*, ed. David Truman (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965), p. 166.
32. Christopher Madison, "Solarz's Brash Style Tempers His Quest for Influence in the Foreign Policy Area," *National Journal* (26 October 1985), pp. 2413-17.
33. Wilcox, p. 261.
34. Myra Macpherson, "Vietnam, the 1960s: A Welter of Conflicting Legacies," *The Washington Post*, 15 April 1985, p. 1.
35. Wilcox, p. 269.
36. Michael Malbin, *Unelected Representatives* (New York: Basic Books, 1980).
37. Based on personal interviews in Washington, D.C., Summer 1982. In the case of the waiver restrictions passed by Congress in 1981 to answer Canadian objections to the Alaskan natural gas pipeline, such a "war room" was organized and proved effective. On coalitional lobbying more generally, see Bill Keller, "Coalitions and Associations Transform Strategy, Methods of Lobbying in Washington," *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, 23 January 1982, pp. 119-23.
38. Wallace Earl Walker and Andrew Krepinevich, "No First Use and Conventional Deterrence: The Politics of Defense Policymaking," in *The Presidency and National Security Policy*, ed. Gordon Hoxie (New York: Center for the Study of the Presidency, 1984), pp. 355-77.
39. Confidential interview with a foreign embassy officer, Washington, D.C., Summer 1982; Hamilton and Van Dusen, p. 18; and John Felton, "Hussein Courts Wary Congress, But Arms Sale Is Uphill Struggle," *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, 5 October 1985, pp. 2018-20.
40. Sanford Ungar, "South Africa's Lobbyists," *The New York Times Magazine*, 13 October 1985, p. 82.
41. On the issue of polarization, see Ole Holsti and James Rosenau, "Vietnam, Consensus and the Belief Systems of American Leaders," *World Politics*, 32 (October 1979), 1-56.
42. Charles Stevens, "The Use and Control of Executive Agreements," *Orbis*, 20 (Winter 1977), 905.
43. Ravenel, pp. 658-60.
44. George Church, "Lessons From a Lost War," *Time*, 15 April 1985, pp. 41-42; and Richard Harwood and Haynes Johnson, "Vietnam, the War's Final Battle," *The Washington Post*, 14 April 1985, p. 1.